

How Should Different Types of Feedback Be Administered to Create More  
Effective Learning Among Advanced ESL Writing Students?

- A Student Perspective

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### Abstract

This paper is set in the context of my experience as a student in advanced ESL writing classes at two Canadian universities. Based on my experience and the research literature, I identify several types of feedback that should be administered by teachers to create more effective learning opportunities among advanced ESL writing students. Even though teachers' feedback and peer feedback play an important role in the process of learning, teacher-student and student-student interactions can result in conflicts since comments in the absence of conference can be unclear, vague or unhelpful to writers. In this paper, I examine the advantages and disadvantages of three main types of feedback: peer feedback, teacher feedback and online feedback with anonymity used in university advanced ESL writing courses. I also present evidence as to which types of feedback are the most effective, how online feedback with anonymity plays an important role in processing peer feedback and how feedback should be administered. I conclude that among advanced ESL writing students written feedback with oral explanations will improve the accuracy of writing faster than only providing written feedback. At the same time, online feedback with anonymity will encourage students to provide more objective feedback than class discussion. I will conclude this paper with what I consider to be an effective model for providing feedback in advanced ESL writing courses through a four-stage approach.

*Key words:* Academic writing, teacher feedback, peer feedback, and online feedback

*"When I walk along with two others, they may serve me as my teachers. I will select their good qualities and follow them, find their bad qualities and avoid them."*---- Confucius

Today's "globalized" world seems smaller than before, and an increasing number of international students are studying abroad. Though students may acquire a more comprehensive education through study in another country, they struggle to succeed in improving their academic writing skills in ESL (English as a second language) classes. Based on my experience of taking advanced ESL writing courses in two different Canadian universities, I fully recognized how important it is among ESL writing students to receive feedback from teachers and peers to improving the accuracy of writing. This raises the question of how feedback is best administered to best support students' learning. In this paper I will investigate the literature in an effort to answer this question. First I will review literature relevant to the issue of feedback from teachers to students which includes two facets: 'written feedback' and 'written feedback with oral explanations'. I will then examine the literature relevant to feedback from students to students which includes two facets: 'peer face-to-face feedback', and 'online feedback with anonymity'.

### **Feedback from Teachers to Students**

During the processes of learning, Montgomery and Baker (2007) explain that students prefer to follow their teachers' comments. Giving attention to teachers' feedback is regarded as effective medicine because teachers always provide some useful suggestions. Teachers wish that they could provide more effective feedback to their students, so that students could be more successful.

**Written feedback.** Both teachers and students believe that teachers' written feedback provides opportunities for students to improve their writing (Montgomery

and Baker, 2007). According to my research, most authors describe two effective types of written feedback which are direct feedback and indirect feedback.

Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) explain that “[d]irect feedback, as in reformulations or writing the correct form above the error[s], implies that the learner simply needs to notice the difference between the correct and incorrect forms” (p. 369). The authors also state that “[i]ndirect feedback means signalling to the learner that there is an error in their writing. Such signalling can be via an editing symbol written above the error[s] or in the margin, or simply underlining or circling the error[s]” (p. 369). No matter whether teachers are using direct feedback or indirect feedback, the aim of these two methods focuses on how to improve students’ writing levels.

From the point of view of students, they always want to acquire more and more feedback from their teacher because they want to learn. Based on various reports in the literature, advanced ESL writing students prefer indirect feedback. For example, Bitchener and Knoch (2010) state:

In composition classes where L2 writers are encouraged to edit and revise their texts, indirect feedback tends to be preferred because it invites writers to draw on their linguistic knowledge when attempting to correct the errors that have been identified. For lower proficiency writers in language learning classes, indirect feedback tends to be less preferred because they have a more limited linguistic repertoire to draw on. (p. 210)

In advanced ESL writing courses students have already mastered key concepts for writing skills, and their overall standards are at a higher level. Therefore they are in a position to make use of indirect feedback. Bitchener (2008) emphasizes that “indirect feedback requires learners to engage in guided learning and problem solving, therefore, promotes the type of reflection that is more likely to foster long-term acquisition” (p. 105). Hence, when teachers point out some errors with symbols, students can understand what the symbols represent and avoid making the same mistakes in the future.

Even though providing indirect feedback to advanced ESL writing students is very useful to improve students' writing standards, the advantages of direct feedback cannot be ignored. For example, some authors suggest that "direct feedback reduces the kind of confusion that can result when students fail to understand or remember the meaning of error codes used by teachers" (Ferris et al., 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Komura, 1999, as cited in Bitchener, 2008, p. 106). Hence, combining perspectives of different authors', it appears that the best way to provide written feedback is using direct feedback and indirect feedback together. In other words, if teachers believe students are able to edit their mistakes through symbols, teachers can use indirect feedback. If not, teachers should directly edit students' errors.

Chandler (2003) compared the length of time it takes for teachers to provide different kinds of written feedback: correction, underline, describe, describe and outline. The author analyzes how much time is required for correction (direct feedback), underline (point out errors only), describe (indirect feedback - point out what types of errors in margin), and describe with underline. Obviously, the fastest method to edit students' errors on one draft is simply to underline them. The second fastest way is correction. However if teachers take the time to combine direct and indirect feedback (describe and underline) they will ultimately spend less time editing in the future.

Many ESL writing teachers have told me that providing written feedback to their students can be very stressful because they are afraid of destroying students' confidence through ineffective feedback. For example, when I attended the conference of *The Association of B.C. Teachers of English as An Additional Language* in 2013, some teachers told me that students can figure out whether their teachers have positive attitudes toward their assignments. If students feel that their

teacher likes their essay, they will gain more confidence and make more effort in the future. If they feel that their teacher does not like their essay, sometimes they will have negative attitudes and this will affect the rest of their assignments. Therefore, when teachers provide written feedback to their students, it is important that they point out the positive qualities as well as the errors.

One issue to consider when teachers provide written feedback is the effort and care that teachers' take and the work that this involves. Lee's (2008) explains that students and parents always evaluate teachers' from written feedback. If teachers provide more detailed feedback to their students, teachers are considered "excellent and responsible" (Lee. 2008, p. 11). On the other hand, students do not necessarily reflect on their own attitudes and practices and how these impact student success.

When students ask their teacher to give the maximum amount of feedback that their teacher can, students should also realize that they should put a corresponding amount of effort into their work. Therefore, when students prepare their essays, they should prepare their assignments carefully because teachers will evaluate their assignments very carefully. In other words, if students do not make the effort to do their best work on their assignment, I do not believe that they have the right to complain about their teachers.

Now, someone may question how much feedback should be provided. Actually, most teachers also wonder about this question because it is really difficult to know. Montgomery and Baker (2007) indicate that:

Though L2 writing teachers are aware of students' perceptions of written feedback and most try to give helpful feedback to their students, teachers may not be fully aware of how much feedback they give on local (i.e., spelling, grammar, and punctuation) and global (i.e., ideas, content, and organization) issues nor whether the type of feedback they feel they should give adheres to their beliefs about written feedback. (p. 83)

In other words, when teachers offer written feedback to their students, the quantity of

feedback may be based on students' mistakes. If students have many errors, teachers may have more feedback because teachers hope students can acquire more knowledge from their feedback. On the other hand, if students do not have many errors, teachers may worry less about them which leads to less feedback. Therefore, sometimes, how much written feedback teachers give to their students depends on the magnitude and number of students' mistakes. It is important for teachers to consider alternatives to this approach. Generally speaking, it is important that teachers provide feedback for those students who are succeeding as well as pointing out the errors for those students who are not.

Another consideration is *how* teachers express their feedback. The way that teachers' express feedback impacts students' attitudes to their work. Hyland and Hyland (2001) classified four features included in teachers' final comments, these are: paired-act patterns, hedges, personal attribution and interrogative syntax. Through these four facets teachers can combine their critical comments with praise and suggestions. In paired-act patterns, the relationship between teachers and students is quite equitable. Teachers and students discuss the paper equally and freely, so that students can acquire more knowledge during the communication. When teachers use hedged praise they preface their comment with phrases such as "I think .." or with words such as "Maybe .." or "Perhaps ..." in order to soften the comments. However writers may not interpret hedged praise as softer. As Hyland and Hyland explain it may, "work for the writer as a rephrased criticism, simply prefacing a criticism or signalling a problem in a way which is less threatening to the teacher-student relationship" (Hyland and Hyland, 2001, p. 198). The authors also state that "personal attribution allows teachers to react as ordinary readers, rather than as experts and to slightly reposition themselves and their relationship to the

student-writer" (Hyland and Hyland, 2001 p.198), so that teacher written feedback may be presented in a less threatening voice. The final form of feedback mentioned is interrogative syntax. The authors explain that "questions are a means of highlighting knowledge limitations and can be used to weaken the force of a statement by making it relative to a writer's state of knowledge. In addition, questions are also useful when one wishes to protect oneself or one's readers from the full effects of what might be considered serious allegations" (p. 199). Hence, teachers should provide more explicit feedback and also avoid using a threatening voice, so that students can gain more confidence in their further writing studies, and teacher-student relationships will be more harmonious.

**Written feedback with oral explanations.** Even though most ESL writing teachers believe that written feedback is very helpful, oral explanations are also important. In my experience as a student, in every face-to-face conference with the teacher, he not only used symbols to point out what types of errors we made, but also explained some serious mistakes to us. At the same time, when we handed in our final essay, he gave detailed written feedback. During the process of written feedback with oral explanations, we have opportunities to ask questions face-to-face if we do not know how to correct the mistakes. Therefore, we benefited from his pedagogy which is providing written feedback with face-to-face conferences, and I hope more and more ESL writing teachers can learn from my ESL writing teacher. However, even though written feedback with oral explanations provides more advantages than written feedback alone, when teachers add face-to-face conferences, the amount of time, they spend on feedback will increase.

The accuracy of students' writing will improve faster when explicit written feedback is combined with face-to-face individual conferences with teachers.

However, according to my experience in advanced ESL courses, if teachers administer face-to-face conferences individually, managing time for the meetings can be difficult to control because they do not know how much time they will need to spend with each student.. For instance, when I took an academic writing course (the highest level), our teacher asked us to make an appointment with him to edit our essay (about 1000 words) from 12:00 to 18:00 in the same day, so that every student would spend thirty minutes to meet him during this time. However, when we met our teacher and he read through our essay with us and edited errors, it took longer than expected, which directly affected the next student. Through this vicious circle, some students waited for him for almost an hour. In order to avoid this situation, teachers could arrange two or three days to process face-to-face conferences, and the meeting time for each students could be expanded to an hour. Then students would have enough time to ask questions during the meeting, and teachers would not be worried about having too many students waiting.

**Summary and implications.** In China, we view teachers as gardeners because gardeners look after their flowers every day so that they bloom luxuriantly. Teachers work hard every day which results in their students achieving success. Even though writing is a long-term task for ESL writing students, if ESL writing teachers continue to make the effort to help their students improve the accuracy of writing, students will improve their writing one day. However, it is of paramount importance that teachers use effective methods to provide feedback. Therefore, ESL writing teachers should pay more attention to providing more explicit written feedback, and they also need to combine this with oral explanations. However, one problem can be that teachers do not have enough time to administer face-to-face individual conferences.

If one-to-one conferences for all students are too time-consuming for teachers, another means for providing oral feedback that teachers can use is goal-directed feedback. In this case, the teacher only meets with those students who exhibit a particular problem with their writing. For example, if some students are not making obvious progress in writing or make the same mistakes again and again, teachers can email them to talk about their mistakes in the office. However, when teachers want to make an appointment with some students to discuss their problems, teachers should meet them at a different time because these students may be very sensitive and will not want to be treated differently than their classmates. Hence, sometimes teachers not only act as “teachers, proofreaders, facilitators, gatekeepers, evaluators and readers” (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 187), but also act as friends and sincere listeners.

During the processes of providing written feedback and written feedback with oral explanations, students should also be encouraged to administer self-editing, so that students can improve the accuracy of their writing faster. According to both Ashwell (2000) and Guenette (2007), even though teachers’ feedback is important, teachers should encourage students to do self-correction and self-revision. Referring to my own experience, I have noticed that when my teachers provide direct feedback, I will not do self-editing because I believe my teachers have helped me correct all the mistakes. In order to encourage students to self-edit, my second writing teacher always asked us to administer self-edit before we handed in our first draft because he said that a good essay depended on editing many times. In particular, when we read our essay aloud, our ears may be more sensitive than our eyes, so that self-editing can help students to improve their English standards comprehensively. Therefore, self-editing is necessary for improving the accuracy of ESL students’ writing. When considering the issue of self-edit, I will pay more attention to indirect feedback

because I should edit errors by myself. Therefore, even though I always prefer to receive direct feedback, in fact obtaining some indirect feedback is very useful because it helps me to remember my writing errors. Ferris and Roberts (2001), emphasize that “less explicit feedback [seems] to help these students to self-edit just as well as corrections coded by error type” (p. 161).

### **Feedback from Students to Students**

Even though teachers play an important role in students’ educational processes, the roles that classmates play cannot be ignored, such as friends, advisors, listeners and even teachers. In other words, the influences of classmates may compare with that of teachers. In particular, in ESL writing classrooms, teachers always ask students to conduct collaborative writing and/or peer feedback, so that teachers can cultivate students’ independent learning. The next section of the paper will examine literature concerning the means by which teachers guide students to administer effective peer feedback to their peers, and the ways students offer useful feedback to their classmates, both in classrooms and through online discussion.

**Peer face-to-face feedback in classrooms.** Collaborative writing is one effective method in ESL writing classrooms which provides more opportunities to learners. When teachers give students a topic to write an essay, peers can brainstorm and share their perspectives. If students begin writing their essay, peers can discuss how to use their language more accurately, so that students’ work may be better than they would be able to achieve individually. These ideas are mentioned in the article by Wigglesworth and Storch (2012), who state that collaborative writing provides more opportunities to discuss the language students use in writing, and through collaborative learning in groups, students can solve language problems together. For instance, when I took an advanced writing course, my best friend and I always studied

together. During the process of brainstorming, my best friend offered many amazing ideas to broaden my thoughts. At the same time, I helped her to check some errors after we finished our first drafts. Consequently, collaborative writing brings more advantages than writing individually.

If advanced ESL writing teachers apply collaborative feedback in the classroom, the number of students who should study together needs to be considered.

Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) explain:

When learners process feedback in pairs they do engage in deliberations about language form and lexical choices, they provide each other with suggestions and counter suggestions, they question each other's suggestions, and they explain their choices by drawing on their knowledge of linguistic conventions and intuitions. (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010a, 2010b; Swain & Lapkin, 2002, as cited in p.6)

From their perspective, when students work in pairs, they will not have extra choices, so that they will be fully focused on engaging in writing with their peers. Based on this point, the authors also conclude:

When working in pairs, learners have two additional advantages compared to working individually: they can receive immediate feedback on their deliberations (in the process of language) and can scaffold each other's performance by each learner drawing on their own linguistic resources and together reaching resolutions that they may not have been able to reach had they been working on their own. (Wigglesworth and Storch, 2012, p. 371)

Considering Wigglesworth and Storch's ideas reminds me of a scenario from my own experience. My ESL writing teacher always asked us to study in pairs. Sometimes, when we wanted to process some activities by groups (three to four students); she always refused us without accepting any excuses. Now, I realize why my teacher did this because she wanted us to fully use the limited class time. On the other hand, in more recent classes, my ESL writing teacher also asked us to administer peer feedback, but we were not in pairs, instead in groups of three or four students. During group discussion, some students contributed a lot, but some students just listened and

nodded without any participating. Hence, based on my own experience, I believe that studying in pairs will be more effective than in groups of three or four students.

However, when students study in pairs, teachers should consider whether same language students can be put together. Most international students prefer to speak their first language because we feel it is easier to communicate. When we discuss questions with the same language speakers in the class, we may easily talk.

Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) explain that, “in analyzing the transcripts of the pair talk during the activity, they [find] that over 30% of the talk concerned specifically language issues suggesting the usefulness of collaborative writing activities” (p. 366).

Meanwhile, based on my experience, when same language ESL writing students administer peer feedback, the amount of useless talking will be increased because they know their teacher does not understand the contents of their conversation, and they have opportunities to communicate fluently. Therefore, I believe that teachers should put different language speakers into pairs, so that they keep their conversation to the main topics and do not wander onto other unnecessary topics, wasting the limited class time.

Even though having different language speakers study together can reduce ineffective discussion in the classroom, oral discussion in English may have more limits in providing feedback. Zhu (2001) explains that sound pedagogical suggestions only help students to understand written feedback better, but “written response allowed the non-native speakers an additional opportunity to convey feedback, suggesting that the written mode of peer response could be a particularly valuable tool for mixed peer response groups and could supplement oral response” (p. 271).

According to Zhu’s (2001) research, some students who are not good at speaking will not participate in class activities as much, and even in group discussion they will not

provide their opinions to others. Yang, Badger and Zhen express similar ideas to Zhu's which state that pairs will allow same language students more space to display their abilities, but the multilingual environment will be a restrictive factor to administer oral discussions through pair-work. Having established that effective peer feedback may be restricted by linguistic skills, it is important to also note that emotions and attitudes can affect the quality of peer feedback.

First, peer feedback can be emotionally laden. Hyland (2000) explains that before students give comments to his/her peers, students will often make sure that their peers will feel comfortable with their criticisms when they receive the written feedback. In this situation, students only want to make comments which can place peer responders at ease, but these comments can be useless and can reduce the value of peer feedback. When students provide feedback to their peers, they will try to avoid potential conflicts because nobody wants to destroy a harmonious relationship with other students. From this facet, students' feedback will have more emotional decisions than teachers, so that the impact of students' feedback may be less.

Another element to consider regarding peer feedback is students' attitudes towards peer feedback. In ESL writing classrooms, students come from different countries, so they are influenced by diverse educational backgrounds which lead to different attitudes towards peer feedback. Carson and Nelson (1996) compared Spanish and Chinese students' perceptions of ESL peer response in group work, but I strongly disagree with some points they make about the reaction of Chinese students in the classrooms. Carson and Nelson (1996) stress that Chinese students avoid criticism of peers' work, and they only want to maintain group harmony. Carson and Nelson (1996) also point out that Chinese students prefer to repeat others' comments, rather than provide new criticism of peers' writing. Confucius said, *be certain of what*

*you know and do not pretend to know what you do not know.* Peer feedback is a way to get some useful information from other students, and we are all students and learn knowledge from teachers. When we provide comments to our peers, sometimes we are not sure whether we are offering the correct comments. Within traditional Chinese education, Chinese students are always careful to avoid wrong decisions when they provide comments. In order to encourage Chinese students to express their opinions on their peers' papers, one suggestion is to provide opportunities for them to make the suggestions with anonymity. All in all, based on the discussions above, teachers' guidance will play an important role in leading peer discussion; in particular, evaluating peers' discussion is also necessary.

When considering advantages and disadvantages in peer feedback, someone may question the roles of teachers in students' peer feedback. Wigglesworth and Storch (2012), and Zhu (2001) state that teachers should provide specific requirements to their students when they administer peer feedback, and teachers also need to help students to clarify their roles in peer feedback. For example, Zhu (2001) lists the roles of readers as, "pointing, advising, announcing, reacting, eliciting, questioning, elaborating, hedging, confirming and justifying" (p. 258-259). For writers, Zhu (2001) concludes their roles are "responding, eliciting and clarifying" (p. 259). Moreover, when I was in ESL writing classes, both teachers asked us to administer peer feedback. However, they did not specify students' roles in the peer work and this resulted in the group work being ineffective, even though teachers provided explicit requirements. I believe the situation would have been better if teachers specified roles and provided a structure that students could follow when administering peer feedback. For example teachers could have arranged several rounds of discussion. In the first round, the role of student A could be *Pointer* which means student A should point out

all the mistakes in student B's paper. Meanwhile, the role of student B could be *Responder* and student B could respond to student A's suggestions. Then in the second round, the role of each student could switch. In other words, the different roles represent different aims, such as pointing and responding, questioning and clarifying, so that specified students' roles in peer discussion will be more goal-oriented. Therefore, teachers not only need to explain their requirements to their students, but also specify the roles for students in peer feedback activities.

Furthermore, teachers need to assist students to process peer feedback, and teachers also need to encourage students to provide both written and oral feedback to their peers. For instance, teachers should separate class time into different parts, such as twenty minutes for brainstorming, and the next twenty minutes for writing outlines in pairs, so that students will understand what they are doing now, and what they will do next. During these processes, teachers not only need to facilitate students' discussion, but also control the contents of their discussion which can be administered through providing grades. After students' discussion, teachers need to collect all the notes which are taken during the discussion, so that teachers can check their notes and assess them. If teachers evaluate students' discussions, students will pay more attention to their peer work. On the other hand, teachers can also suggest that students provide written feedback with oral explanations to their classmates, so that students can acquire more benefits from peer feedback. Therefore, teachers' roles in processing peer feedback are crucial because they need to make sure their students are using time effectively, and they need to facilitate students in processing peer feedback.

**Online feedback with anonymity.** With the comprehensive application of computer technology, online feedback has become common in most university ESL writing

classes. In my paper, online feedback with anonymity means that students post their essays without using their real name on sites such as Blackboard, or Drop Box, so that their classmates can provide feedback to the writers in anonymous environments.

According to some articles, online peer feedback has more advantages than traditional feedback (teacher feedback and peer feedback in classrooms), such as giving students more confidence and free space to present more critical comments. For example, Guardado and Shi (2007) emphasize that when students have anonymity, they can “make [more] critical comments on others’ [writing] [freely]” (p. 443). Moreover, the authors also suggest that, “online peer feedback [turns] into a one-way communication process” (p. 443), so that students may gain more confidence to express more comments. Therefore, besides traditional teacher feedback and peer feedback in classrooms, many authors have begun to research what functions online peer feedback can serve, and they report both advantages and disadvantages of online peer feedback.

Online peer feedback increases more participation. Jones, Angel, Garralda, Li and Lock (2006) suggest that, “the electronic environment frees ESL students from the embarrassment to speak English with peers who share the same first language versus what they experienced in face-to-face encounters” (as cited in Guardado & Shi, 2007, p. 445). For example, when I came to Canada, I did not want to talk with my classmates at the beginning because I was always afraid I would make spoken mistakes. I preferred to correspond by e-mail with my instructors and my classmates; moreover, with written communication I began to gain more confidence and to have more interactions with my classmates in class. Even though now I can communicate with my friends freely, both online and in classrooms, online interactions were the first step to help me join a new environment.

On the other hand, I believe that even though online peer feedback encourages students to provide more effective feedback, teachers' roles need to be emphasized during peer discussion. This goes against Tuzi's (2004) opinions. Tuzi (2004) states that online peer feedback reduces the role of teachers. However, Guardado and Shi (2007) argue that teachers' guidance will maximize the effect of online peer feedback and teachers should join what Guardado and Shi call "follow-up discussions" (p. 458). For example, in the article, "ESL students' experience of online peer feedback", the authors mention that,

"[w]ith the guidance of the teacher whom many ESL students respect as an authority who knows what good writing is and who gives final marks to the papers under review, the process would ease the concern of ESL students about the quality of peer feedback and build to their confidence in following the feedback effectively in their revisions" (Guardado and Shi, 2007, p. 458).

Teacher-directed feedback can help students get more useful comments and also help responders know whether they provide correct feedback to the receivers. Therefore, with the teachers' evaluation both responders and receivers obtain effective teacher feedback.

Even though there are advantages to online feedback, shortcomings still exist. In their article Guardado and Shi, (2007) provide three main disadvantages. First, although online feedback allows clear, brief and conducive feedback, without the use of facial expressions or body language, students may miss explicit references that could be made obvious using indexical devices. In addition this form of feedback requires that students possess related computer skills. Furthermore, asynchronous conferences reduce interactions, so that online peer feedback may miss these immediate interactions. Sometimes, one-way communication may create misunderstandings, and if the authors want to ask questions anonymously, the authors may feel uncomfortable which creates negative effects on the processes of online peer

feedback. Ultimately, even though synchronous chat avoids the delayed interactions, “researchers have found synchronous chats sometimes disjointed, scattered, confusing, and disruptive” (p. 445). Indeed, synchronous is an indirect face-to-face style, so it also requires strictly linguistic standards. Hence, without body language, ESL students will face considerable challenges. In addition, writing skills are highly dependent upon computer skills. As well, delayed responses can cause more confusion.

**Summary and Implications.** Both teacher feedback and peer feedback can help advanced ESL writing students to improve their writing, but the sequences of processing teacher feedback and peer feedback will also affect the final results when students receive the feedback. As mentioned by Yang, Badger and Zhen (2006), “if the peer gives feedback first, [the student] would be much freer to express his opinions” (p. 194). Teacher feedback can be provided which can evaluate both the essay and the peers’ comments. When compared with peer feedback, teacher feedback seems more effective, and students prefer as much teacher feedback as possible because they believe teachers are more professional than classmates. In an article, the author stresses that “teachers provide more specific, idea-based, meaning-level feedback in the multiple-draft context [; it can be more effective in promoting student revision in both the L1 (Hillocks, 1982; Ziv, 1984, as cited in Paulus, 1999, p. 267) and L2 contexts” (Hyland, 1990, as cited in Paulus, p. 267). Therefore, acquiring more objective feedback creates more chances to improve writing standards.

However, even though students will have greater trust in their teachers than their classmates, students may feel more comfortable to talk with their classmates than teachers, and students can understand their peers’ mistakes better because they may have made the same mistakes before. Meanwhile, teachers have to face many

students, and they may not have enough time to communicate with every student, so that teachers may misunderstand students' meaning. However, when students work in pairs they will have only one person to assist with peer feedback; they will have enough time to edit their drafts and negotiate with their peer when they have problems in understanding the meanings of their essay. For instance, Miao, Badger and Zhen (2006) suggest that,

[P]eer feedback appears to bring about a higher percentage of meaning-change revision while most teacher-influenced revisions happen at surface level. At the same time, teacher-initiated revisions are less successful than peer-initiated revisions, probably because negotiation of meaning during the peer interaction helps to enhance mutual understanding and reduce misinterpretation and miscommunication. (p. 193)

Therefore, if teachers effectively facilitate their students to administer peer feedback first and then engage in teacher-feedback later, the accuracy of their students' writing will obviously improve.

After considering all of the information that I have mentioned I have come up with a suggested general method for providing more effective feedback to advanced ESL writing students. In the next paragraph I will outline this suggested method.

### **A Suggested Model for Administering Feedback**

Based on the literature and my own experience, I conclude this article with a suggestion for an effective model to administer feedback to advanced ESL writing students. This model is illustrated in Figure 1. Briefly, students collaborate to brainstorm after knowing the topic, and teachers facilitate their conversations. Students finish their first draft individually and administer peer feedback, which will be graded by teachers later. After peer-editing, students revise their second drafts to hand them in. Then, teachers provide direct and indirect written feedback to students. Meanwhile, if teachers want to do face-to-face conferences, teachers can arrange

students' conferences by email. Ultimately, when students revise their final essay, which will include self-edit, they can post them online with anonymity and begin online discussion.

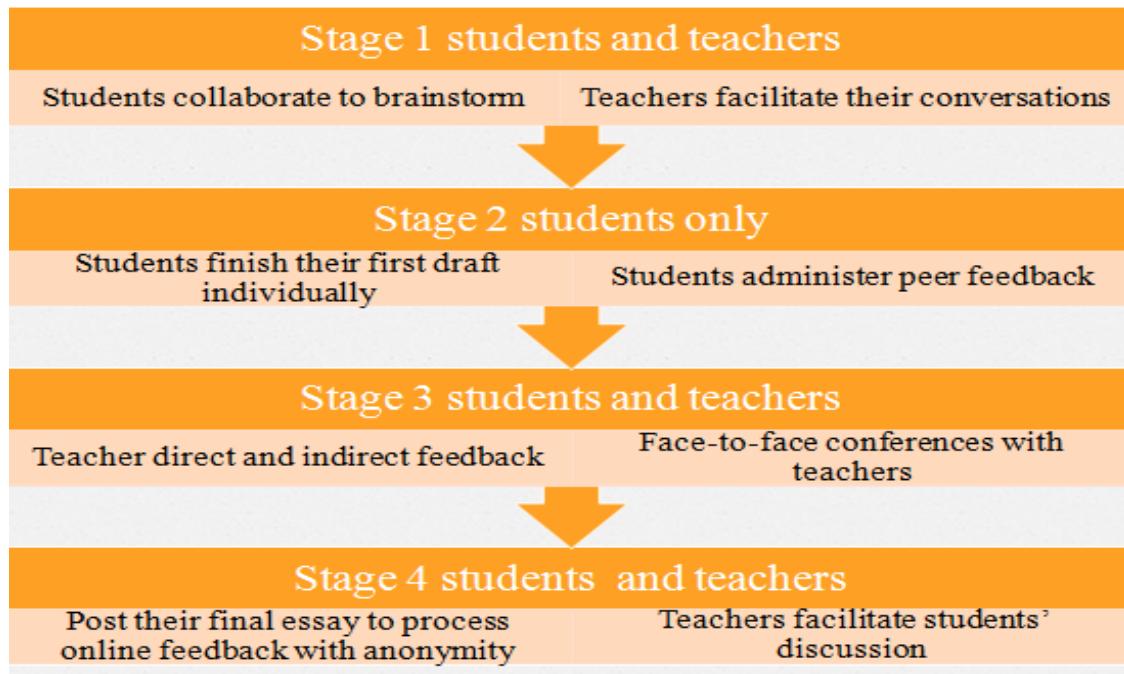


Figure 1: Suggested model to administer feedback

**Stage 1.** When teachers give their students a topic to write on, teachers can ask students to first work in pairs to administer collaborative writing which mainly focuses on brainstorming.

**Stage 2.** After brainstorming, students can begin to write their essay individually, and then obtain peers' feedback in the first draft. After students revise their first draft, they can hand in their second draft to the teacher.

**Stage 3.** Then, teachers can use both direct and indirect feedback with their students; meanwhile, if teachers want to use one-to-one conferencing, they can arrange it. However, for the conference, teachers should control the time; otherwise, students will waste a lot of time on waiting.

**Stage 4.** Ultimately, when students receive the second edit, they will finish their final essay and post it online with anonymity. Students can comment on their classmates' essays online, so that students can gain more feedback for their final essay.

All in all, based on these steps described above, both teachers and students can achieve mutual gains. Teachers can comprehensively understand their students and students can have more benefits from various types of feedback.

If my suggested model is to be used in the future, time management is a factor of paramount importance during each stage. If teachers spend too much time on one stage, both students and teachers may feel stressed and uneasy. For example, nobody likes reading the same paper again and again. Therefore it is important that teachers and students do not spend too much time on stages 2 and 3.

### **Conclusion**

After discussing various types of feedback in advanced ESL writing courses, how can we classify these different types of feedback? Stiggins (2013) classifies feedback as 'assessment for learning' and explains that both students and teachers can acquire knowledge from feedback. Brown (2004) states that,

"if assessment is to be integral to learning, feedback must be at the heart of the process. Even though it is time consuming, I would argue that significant energy must be devoted to helping students to understand not only where they have gone wrong, but also what they need to do to improve" (p. 4).

Providing effective feedback is a crucial factor in educational processes. The primary purpose of this article is to help ESL writing teachers to provide more useful feedback to their students, so that students may improve their accuracy of writing faster. In this paper I have critically analyzed the literature and synthesized it to create a suggested model to facilitate ESL writing teachers to administer more effective feedback to their students. My suggested model will not only help ESL writing teachers, but also writing centers in universities.

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